

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 265 269

UD 024 671

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TITLE The Career Guidance and Counseling of In-School Hispanics: Some Practical Theoretical Considerations.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Vocational Association (Atlanta, GA, December 6-10, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Counseling; Family Influence; High Schools; *Hispanic Americans; *School Counseling; *School Counselors; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS *Illinois

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to describe the type and adequacy of career and occupational guidance and counseling services provided to Hispanic students in selected Illinois public high schools, and examines what types of career development theories and approaches are applicable, which ones need improvement, and what adjustments should be made to address the needs of Hispanic students. The study population consisted of 78 limited English proficient and non-limited English proficient Hispanic students, 12 career guidance counselors, four directors of counseling programs, and four persons in charge of career materials, in two urban schools, a rural school, and an inner-city area school. The primary finding was that Hispanics are, in general, the recipients of unstructured and superficial occupational guidance services due to the high pupil-counselor ratio, limited resources, varied responsibilities of counselors, and absence of a theoretical foundation for the counseling programs. Furthermore, it was found that over three quarters of the students interviewed were in the lowest educational tracks; and that while in-school personnel provided the superficial career counseling information, the more important issues were usually discussed with family and friends. The report concludes that the currently provided services are inadequate for the Hispanic population and makes recommendations to the Illinois State Board of Education for improving career counseling for Hispanic students. (CG)

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THE CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING OF IN-SCHOOL HISPANICS: SOME PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The 1978 Amendments of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 95-561) mandate comprehensive guidance, counseling, and testing in elementary and secondary schools for all pupils. This law also indicates the creation of special guidance and counseling programs to meet the special needs of disadvantaged persons. More recently, the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, Title 3, Part D, Section 331, authorizes that a fifth of the funds available to a state be used for activities that make guidance programs accessible to "women, disadvantaged, the handicapped, individuals with limited English proficiency, and minorities." Laws of this type affect the planning, evaluation, funding, and accountability of support services at federal, state, and local levels.

In Illinois, the impetus to provide adequate career guidance to some of these special groups was initiated in 1975 by the Illinois State Board of Education. By 1978, Career Guidance Centers had been initiated throughout the state to provide assistance in working with the career guidance needs of, among other groups, limited English-speaking, disadvantaged, and out-of-school populations.

Establishing adequate guidance systems for special needs students has been a difficult task for local educational institutions. Prominent obstacles to overcome involve legislated criteria that are too general, academic and vocational plans with no specific mention of special career development services, and the lack of adequate data to discern the extent, nature, and effectiveness of guidance services provided to Hispanic individuals. In addition, there is no information on the extent to which career development theories and approaches apply to the guidance services provided to in-school Hispanic youth in Illinois.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this study was to describe the type and adequacy of career and occupational guidance and counseling services provided to Hispanic students in selected Illinois public high schools. Before career development needs of Hispanics can be addressed effectively, knowledge regarding what services are available in the field and the adequacy of such services is needed.

The study also contributes to the development of an organized body of knowledge which identifies the types of career and occupational guidance and counseling services provided to Hispanic students in Illinois.

Presented at the annual conference of the American Vocational Association (Atlanta, GA, 1985).

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Finally, the appropriateness of career development theories and approaches are, for the most part, untried in attempting to explain the career needs and choices of Hispanic individuals. This study assisted in collecting information that may shed some light on what parts of these theories and approaches are applicable, what practices can be improved, and what adjustments need to be made to address the career guidance and counseling needs of in-school Hispanic populations in the State of Illinois.

The objectives of this study led to the formulation of major research questions in the following areas: Delivery of Career Guidance Services, Perceptions of Effectiveness, Other Career Guidance and Counseling Needs of Hispanic Youth, and Impact and Utility of Theoretical Approaches.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The primary research method utilized in this study was survey research. More specifically, the study utilized face-to-face semi-structured interviews in order to attain information related to the extent and nature of the career guidance and counseling services provided to Hispanic youth in four schools in Illinois.

The development of five interview guides was accomplished through the following procedures: (a) a review of the literature to develop interview items and identify dimensions of career guidance, (b) submitting the list of interview items to an Advisory Committee of Experts (ACE) and to an expert in the Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois, and (c) translating the students' interview items to Spanish for use with LEP students and submitting them to bilingual evaluators to check the accuracy of the translation. The items in the interview guides were related to the major research questions of the study.

Four subpopulations of persons in four different locations were identified for inclusion in the study. It was determined that the following four groups would provide a multifaceted in-depth view of career guidance counseling: 78 LEP and non-LEP Hispanic students, 12 high school counselors, four directors or counseling programs, and four persons in charge of career materials. Schools in the investigation were located in two urban areas (Sites A and B) in the Northwestern portion of the state of Illinois, a small rural town (Site C) in the East central portion of the state, and an inner-city area (Site D) in a metropolitan center of over 3 million people.

Pilot tests were conducted to: (a) determine the length, clarity, and completeness of the interview guides, (b) refine the instruments of the study, and (c) determine the appropriateness of the structural and administrative aspects of the instruments. Due to the absence of individuals, among the university students chosen, who felt comfortable being interviewed in Spanish, the interview guide in that language was not pilot tested.

Nominal level data extracted from the factual questions in the

study were tabulated and reported in the forms of frequencies, percentages, and narrative. The information gathered through open-ended responses were analyzed by content analysis and also presented in tabular and narrative forms.

RESULTS: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings and Conclusions

Several conclusions about the career guidance and counseling services provided to Hispanic youth in four schools in Illinois were derived from the data presented in the body of this report.

Perhaps the single most important finding of this study is that, although in-school Hispanics are exposed as a group to a variety of services, as individuals they receive, for the most part, career and occupational guidance services that are unstructured and superficial in nature. The main reasons behind this somewhat precarious condition of supportive resources related to (a) the high number of pupils per counselor, (b) the limited amount of resources available (i.e., time, available funds, lack of expertise among some of the counselors), (c) the numerous and varied responsibilities assigned to counseling professionals, and (d) the absence of a (theoretical or research-based) infrastructure upon which to lay the foundation of the counseling program. In addition, the four guidance programs are not based on closely monitored goals, objectives, or other measures of program accountability. Thus, it can therefore be concluded that the role played by career guidance services in addressing the immediate career and occupational needs of Hispanic high school youth in the study is, at best, minimal. Lacking clear structure, purpose, and resources, guidance professionals face the enormous challenge of transforming an array of disjointed ancillary services into a comprehensive developmental program with established goals and measurable objectives. In addition, the role of guidance and counseling in increasing the retention and educational attainment of Hispanic youth remains unclear.

Another finding that may be closely related to the first is that over three-fourths of Latino pupils interviewed are concentrated in the lowest educational tracks: general education, vocational education, and GED programs. Goodlad (1984) posits that students in these tracks not only advance more slowly, but also develop problems of "lower self-esteem more school misconduct, higher dropout rates, and higher delinquency" (p.125). The placement of most Hispanics in vocational and general tracks may account in part, for their low levels of career and occupational expectations, educational preparation, and economic advancement. When placed in vocational education, few Hispanics attend top-rated vocational programs (National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, 1984, p. 32). Hispanics in this study enrolled, for the most part, in sex-stereotyped programs without state-of-the-art equipment. Thus, they are less likely to move into the better occupational opportunities after graduation.

It can therefore be concluded that career guidance and counseling as it currently exist in most of the high schools in the study, holds no concrete value to Hispanic and other advocates as a significant tool for helping in the personal, educational, and economic uplifting of Hispanic youth. Without the proper structure, purpose, and resources, there is only a faint hope that guidance and counseling practitioners will undertake efforts that could make a substantial difference. The most substantial barrier confronted by counselors in this investigation was lacking enough time to meet the needs of all students who need assistance. Most Hispanic students, on the other hand, want additional guidance as well as the accompanying services and activities that the counseling staff have not been able to provide for them. In order to meet the need "we need comprehensive career guidance programs...Comprehensive guidance means counseling that is available to all students, covering all subjects, leading to all occupations." (The National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education, 1984, p.10).

A third finding that may also be intimately related to the first two is that a division of labor may indeed exist in regard to the provision of career guidance and counseling. In-school personnel (classroom teachers and counselors) appear to be providing, by and large, general career information and guidance, and the more intimate group (parents, friends, and other relatives) seem to assist more directly in the more critical (and emotionally-laden) areas of (a) occupational and career planning and selection, and (b) discussion of educational and career/job related problems (i.e., lack of skills in the English language, economics, and discrimination). It can therefore be concluded that career guidance and counseling programs as they currently exist in the schools studied are addressing perhaps some of the most superficial, and most easily served, career and occupational needs of Hispanic youth. Concerns in this area may be related to the fact that:

Few Hispanic parents who have not completed school themselves can advise and guide their children through high school--can advise them on what courses to take, how to prepare their lessons, what occupations to strive for, and what is required for college entrance and success. (National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, 1984, Vol. II, p. 71).

In addition, an even more pressing concern is the suspicion that significant others may be, unwittingly, acting as transmitters of a working class "culture" that offer Latino youth a limited set of occupational options structured around the most accessible (unskilled) areas of the occupational milieu.

The last significant finding is that the philosophical underpinnings of the counseling programs visited were more related to notions of human resource development, investment in human capital, and civil rights, than to any particular facet of a specific career

development theory. Operational goals and objectives utilize prescriptive and corrective measures rather than theory or research-oriented structures to guide career services. It can therefore be concluded that in the provision of career guidance to Hispanic students there is no explicit or systematic use of career development theories and approaches in any of the schools in the study. Career guidance and counseling services appear to be a rather loose conglomeration of resources and activities derived from (a) vague application of career education principles, (b) measures to alleviate pressing deficiencies, and (c), the host of (clerical, administrative, disciplinary, guidance and counseling) responsibilities assigned to counseling professionals.

In relation to the appropriateness of career development theories to address the career needs of Hispanics, it can be stated that comprehensive career guidance is based on conceptual models and assumptions oriented to a White middle-class, monolingual (English) male audience. Few studies have examined whether career theories and approaches are appropriate for Hispanics, although initial (albeit partial) efforts have been made with sociological and trait-oriented models.

From the minority perspective, perhaps the two greatest shortcomings of the various theories have been their neglect of socio-cultural, environmental, and economic influences, as well as their failure to account for the important effects of sociodemographic variables, such as race, sex, ethnicity, language, and social class. These are serious omissions since the literature shows that some of these variables (i.e., race and social class) are important determinants of career status.

Additional criticisms of the appropriateness of career theories for Hispanics and other minorities have been mounted on several fronts. They range from accusations that the theories reflect a psychological bias that exaggerates the role of intra-psychic variables, or that the career field is plagued with ambiguous terminology and segmented theories, to enunciations that the theoretical constructs may not reflect the actual labor market experience of disadvantaged groups.

Using the preceding discussion as background, it can therefore be concluded that, without further supplementation or modification, most of the existing career development theories are inappropriate to explain the occupational and career development of Hispanics and other minorities.

Without proper validation with specific subgroups, at this juncture it seems inappropriate to generalize about the career development and the career needs of Hispanics from theoretical assumptions and research findings of a heterogeneous nature.

Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made based upon the findings and conclusions of this investigation. Most of these recommendations are addressed to the (Illinois) State Board of Education and the Department

of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education. Other service providers that should be considered in improving guidance services for Hispanic youth are universities, local high schools, and counselors. The recommendations of the study include the following:

The Illinois State Board of Education/Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education should:

- 1) Encourage LEAs (local educational agencies) to conduct needs assessments of counselors and students in order to provide supportive services that adequately address the career and occupational interests as well as the linguistic, labor-market, and other personal needs of in-school Hispanics.
- 2) Require that the 12 Illinois Regional Career Guidance Centers and LEAs have a minimum of career and occupational materials, in both English and Spanish, that are tailored to the reading levels of students with low reading ability.
- 3) Provide inservice training to counseling and other school personnel on the (a) nature, incidence, and impact of testing practices, (b) fundamental policy questions generated by the use of standardized tests, (c) appropriate use and interpretations of test results, and (d) the use of culture and sex fair testing.
- 4) Provide incentives to schools that involve Hispanic parents in the guidance and counseling of their children. Incentives should also be offered to schools that provide inservice training in Spanish and/or English to Hispanic parents.
- 5) Require that tests related to the interests, abilities, and achievement of LEP and non-LEP Hispanic students should: (a) be administered only after the reading level of the students in their dominant language has been determined, (b) be available and administered in the native language of the LEP students, (c) not be used alone but in conjunction with other forms of assessment (i.e., interviews in the dominant language of the students).
- 6) Include a section in the local district's educational plan for LEAs to list career guidance services, approaches, and procedures, to be used with LEP and non-LEP disadvantaged pupils.
- 7) Establish collaborative agreements through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) encouraging the linkage among LEAs and other local agencies to improve guidance and counseling to LEP and non-LEP disadvantaged youth.
- 8) Provide incentives to LEAs to develop demonstration programs which utilize competency-oriented approaches to the career and occupational guidance of Hispanic and other minority students (e.g., students know how to prepare for careers in which they are interested, students can handle adult disapproval if choosing a course usually taken by members of the opposite sex, students understand graduation requirements, students have confidence in themselves, students can complete application forms properly, students can make decisions, students know what jobs graduates found and where).

- 9) Provide funding for demonstration career guidance projects to develop appropriate strategies and procedures to use in the guidance and counseling of different Hispanic students. Important factors that could be taken into consideration for this type of experimental project are: (a) the socio-demographic characteristics of the students (i.e., rural-urban origin, length of stay in the U.S., native and English language proficiency, degree of acculturation, internal-external locus of control and responsibility, learning style), (b) type, size, and geographic location of the LEAs involved, (c) optimal number of students per counselor, (d) most effective type of counselor (bilingual, bilingual and bicultural, Anglo, Hispanic), (e) effective interactional patterns between students and counselors, among students, and among counselors, (f) cost of program, and (g) staffing patterns.
- 10) Encourage the dissemination and utilization of the most current research findings among counselors in pertinent areas such as the counseling of special needs students, effects supportive services may have on students' aspirations, expectations and motivations.
- 11) Fund inservice training by universities and other agencies at the local level to educate counselors and other school staff serving Hispanics about the career development, cross-cultural counseling, special services, assessment, and labor market needs of Latino youth.
- 12) Fund the development of demonstration programs that experiment with alternative modes of supportive service delivery to (a) retain potential dropouts in school, and (b) assist actual school dropouts in completing their formal education.
- 13) Provide partial funding and grant state approval to the network of alternative school programs that meet certain requirements in serving high school dropouts in Illinois.

The Illinois State Board of Education/ Department of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education/ and Universities should:

- 1) encourage research on the role guidance and counseling plays in the tracking into specific curricula, identification and retention of potential school dropouts, and school-to-work transition of Hispanic students.
- 2) Encourage the preparation and placement of a greater number of bilingual/bicultural counselors in order to promote more communication and trust between the counseling staff and Hispanic parents.

Universities and Other Institutions of Higher Education should:

- 1) Recruit and train bilingual/bicultural counselors.
- 2) Emphasize empathy as one of the most important qualities a counselor should have. Bilingual preparation can be critical in certain counseling programs, however, linguistic competence without empathy may not insure counselor effectiveness.

LEAs should:

- 1) Make special efforts to have counseling staff working closely with other school personnel in the career guidance of Latinos.

- 2) Make a strong effort to follow-up graduates and to form a graduate association. Former students can serve to in-school individuals as role models, sources of employment, and peer counselors.
- 3) Make efforts to extend the expertise of available counselors through the inservice training of classroom teachers and parents, and the use of group techniques and computers.

School Counselors should:

- 1) Attempt to identify those LEP and non-LEP Hispanic youth who are most in need of counseling but who do not avail themselves of the services.
- 2) In order to increase student retention, begin addressing in a systematic fashion the personal needs of Hispanic-origin youth to help them cope with the economic, social, and academic pressures in their lives.
- 3) Assist Hispanic pupils in setting higher (but realistic) expectations.

Theorists and Researchers should give more serious consideration in their paradigms and field studies to:

- 1) The crucial role that demographic characteristics and other (political, social, psychological and economic) forces play in the career choice and career patterns of Hispanic and other minorities.
- 2) Alternative models of career counseling which incorporate some of the following elements: (a) emphasis on personal relationships, (b) minimal use of scheduled appointments and office interviews, (c) a directive approach to guidance and counseling, (d) inclusion of the family, or at least acknowledging its role in the career-decision making process, (e) the student's identity (ethnic identity, degree of acculturation), (f) utilization of multilingual and multi-cultural counselors, (g) utilization of group approaches in the guidance of Hispanic youth, (h) testing of minority identity development models.

Implications for Future Research

In order to build on the outcomes of this study, future researchers should:

- 1) Encourage research aimed at explaining the reasons behind diverse patterns of use of supportive services by minority and disadvantaged groups.
- 2) Study the relationship between intra- and extra-psychic variables and the quantity and quality of supportive services provided to minorities by high school counselors.
- 3) Study the role of supportive services in the career and academic orientation and choice of high school minority students.

- 4) Study the extent and nature of "self-tracking" in curricular, career, and occupational choices, and the role significant other (i.e., family and friends) and school personnel (i.e., counselors and teachers) play in such a process.
- 5) Study the extent to which significant others are acting as transmitters of a working class "culture" that channels Latinos and other minorities into the most accessible (unskilled) areas of the occupational arena.
- 6) Study the extent to which high school counseling practitioners are ready to make operational a career supportive service framework based on theories, or research inspired by them, of career development.

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